



DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

[Docket No. ICEB-2022-0012]

[RIN 1653-ZA32]

Employment Authorization for Ethiopian F-1 Nonimmigrant Students Experiencing Severe Economic Hardship as a Direct Result of the Current Crisis in Ethiopia

AGENCY: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; Department of Homeland Security.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice announces that the Secretary of Homeland Security (Secretary) is suspending certain regulatory requirements for F-1 nonimmigrant students whose country of citizenship is Ethiopia, regardless of country of birth (or individuals having no nationality who last habitually resided in Ethiopia), and who are experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current crisis in Ethiopia. The Secretary is taking action to provide relief to these Ethiopian students who are lawful F-1 nonimmigrant students so the students may request employment authorization, work an increased number of hours while school is in session, and reduce their course load while continuing to maintain their F-1 nonimmigrant student status. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will deem an F-1 nonimmigrant student granted employment authorization by means of this notice to be engaged in a “full course of study” for the duration of the employment authorization, if the nonimmigrant student satisfies the minimum course load requirement described in this notice.

DATES: This notice is effective [INSERT DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER], through Wednesday June 12, 2024.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sharon Snyder, Unit Chief, Policy and Response Unit, Student and Exchange Visitor Program, MS 5600, U.S. Immigration and

Customs Enforcement, 500 12th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20536-5600; e-mail:

sevp@ice.dhs.gov, telephone: (703) 603-3400. This is not a toll-free number. Program information can be found at <https://www.ice.gov/sevis/>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

What action is DHS taking under this notice?

The Secretary is exercising authority under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9) to temporarily suspend the applicability of certain requirements governing on-campus and off-campus employment for F-1 nonimmigrant students whose country of citizenship is Ethiopia regardless of country of birth (or individuals having no nationality who last habitually resided in Ethiopia), who are present in the United States in lawful F-1 nonimmigrant student status on the date of publication of this notice, and who are experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current crisis in Ethiopia. Effective with this publication, suspension of the employment limitations is available through [DATE], 2024, for those who are in lawful F-1 nonimmigrant status on the date of publication of this notice. DHS will deem an F-1 nonimmigrant student granted employment authorization through this notice to be engaged in a “full course of study” for the duration of the employment authorization, if the student satisfies the minimum course load set forth in this notice.¹ *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(F).

Who is covered by this notice?

This notice applies exclusively to F-1 nonimmigrant students who meet all of the following conditions:

¹ Because the suspension of requirements under this notice applies throughout an academic term during which the suspension is in effect, DHS considers an F-1 nonimmigrant student who engages in a reduced course load or employment (or both) after this notice is effective to be engaging in a “full course of study,” *see* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6), and eligible for employment authorization, through the end of any academic term for which such student is matriculated as of [DATE], 2024, provided the student satisfies the minimum course load requirements in this notice. DHS also considers students who engage in online coursework pursuant to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) guidance for nonimmigrant students to be in compliance with regulations while such guidance remains in effect. *See* ICE Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions on COVID-19, Nonimmigrant Students & SEVP-Certified Schools: Frequently Asked Questions, <https://www.ice.gov/coronavirus> (last visited Oct. 6, 2022).

(1) Are a citizen of Ethiopia regardless of country of birth (or an individual having no nationality who last habitually resided in Ethiopia);

(2) Were lawfully present in the United States in F-1 nonimmigrant status under section 101(a)(15)(F)(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(F)(i), on the date of publication of this notice;

(3) Are enrolled in an academic institution that is Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified for enrollment for F-1 nonimmigrant students;

(4) Are currently maintaining F-1 nonimmigrant status; and

(5) Are experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current crisis in Ethiopia.

This notice applies to F-1 nonimmigrant students in an approved private school in kindergarten through grade 12, public school grades 9 through 12, and undergraduate and graduate education. An F-1 nonimmigrant student covered by this notice who transfers to another SEVP-certified academic institution remains eligible for the relief provided by means of this notice.

Why is DHS taking this action?

DHS is taking action to provide relief to Ethiopian F-1 nonimmigrant students experiencing severe economic hardship due to the current crisis in Ethiopia caused by the armed conflict in multiple regions of the country resulting in large-scale displacement of civilians. Based on its review of country conditions in Ethiopia and input received from the U.S. Department of State (DOS), DHS is taking action to allow eligible F-1 nonimmigrant students from Ethiopia to request employment authorization, work an increased number of hours while school is in session, and reduce their course load while continuing to maintain F-1 nonimmigrant student status.

The conflict in northern Ethiopia began in November 2020, when a constitutional dispute between Tigray and federal leaders escalated into conflict amid a prolonged power struggle.² Human rights abuses by all parties to the conflict have been reported, including killings, torture, gender-based violence, arbitrary or unjust detentions, and there have also been potential human trafficking crimes.³ The federal government declared a humanitarian truce in the Tigray region on March 24, 2022, which was reciprocated by the Tigrayan regional authorities, but hostilities resumed on August 24, 2022.⁴ On September 1, 2022, Tigray authorities stated that the Ethiopian and Eritrean armies had launched major offenses into the northwestern Tigray region.⁵ After significant engagement by the African Union and other partners, delegations from the government of Ethiopia and Tigray regional authorities signed a cessation of hostilities agreement in Pretoria on November 2. While this agreement is an important initial step in curbing violence in northern Ethiopia, it does not address violence in other parts of Ethiopia, and – as of early November 2022 – there remains significant humanitarian suffering as a result of the two-year conflict.

Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) data indicates that over 230 alleged incidents of civilians being targeted were reported in Ethiopia during the first six months of 2022.⁶

Violence in Ethiopia has caused many to flee their homes and has exacerbated humanitarian concerns regarding access to food, water, and healthcare. A September 2022 United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) report stated: “more than 20 million people affected by violence as well as climatic shocks...require

² International Crisis Group, *Avoiding the Abyss as War Resumes in Northern Ethiopia* (Sept. 7, 2022), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/avoiding-abyss-war-resumes-northern-ethiopia>.

³ *Id.*; Department of State, 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report (July 19, 2022), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

⁴ International Crisis Group, *Avoiding the Abyss as War Resumes in Northern Ethiopia* (Sept. 7, 2022), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/avoiding-abyss-war-resumes-northern-ethiopia>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ ACLED, *Multiple Complications Threaten to Result in a Dangerous Re-escalation* (Aug. 15, 2022), <https://acleddata.com/10-conflicts-to-worry-about-in-2022/ethiopia/mid-year-update/>.

humanitarian assistance and protection services until the end of 2022.”⁷ In July 2022, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) estimated that 29.7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, including access to food, water, and health services, in Ethiopia. UNICEF also estimated that there were 2.75 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ethiopia.⁸ An August 2022 report by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) stated that, in 2022, 20.4 million people are estimated to be severely food insecure, which is 2.4 million more than in 2021.⁹ In addition, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that there are more than 59,500 Ethiopian refugees in eastern Sudan who have fled violence in Ethiopia.¹⁰

Ethiopia is facing multiple and overlapping crises, significantly impacting the security and humanitarian situation throughout the country. Areas experiencing conflict have seen their local healthcare systems severely damaged and diminished. A July 2022 World Health Organization (WHO) report stated that in the Tigray region, just 22 percent of health facilities were fully functioning, with 75 percent only partially functioning, and 3 percent not functioning at all.¹¹ Additionally, Ethiopia has been experiencing one of the most severe droughts in the last forty years since late 2020.¹² Drought conditions have resulted in widespread death of livestock, a key source of food, milk, and income for pastoralists.¹³ Due to the instability caused by increased levels of armed conflict, Ethiopia is facing economic pressure. Annual inflation remains high, driven by rising food and fuel costs, which puts pressure on households’ ability to

⁷ UNOCHA, *Ethiopia Situation Overview* (Sept. 7, 2022), <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ethiopia/card/5EhBh4Xf5z/>.

⁸ UNICEF, *Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 7* (July 2022), <https://www.unicef.org/media/126921/file/Ethiopia%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report%20No.%207,%20July%202022.pdf>.

⁹ UN FAO, *GIEWS – Global Information and Early Warning System, Country Briefs, Ethiopia* (Aug. 24, 2022), <https://www.fao.org/giews/countrybrief/country.jsp?code=ETH&lang=en>.

¹⁰ UNOCHA, Sudan: East Sudan (Kassala & Gedaref) & Blue Nile States – Ethiopian Emergency Situation Update (as of 31 August 2022), (Sept. 14, 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/sudan-east-sudan-kassala-gedaref-blue-nile-states-ethiopian-emergency-situation-update-31-august-2022>.

¹¹ WHO, *Situation Report: Greater Horn of Africa Drought and Food Insecurity Grade 3 Emergency* (July 29, 2022), https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/emergencies/who_ghoa_sitrep_2022-08-08.pdf?sfvrsn=dbdfc8b0_3&download=true.

¹² UNOCHA, *Ethiopia: Drought Update No. 4, June 2022* (June 3, 2022), <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-drought-update-no-4-june-2022>.

¹³ *Id.*

access market foods. Annual inflation in July 2022 was at 33.5 percent, slightly lower than in June 2022.¹⁴ Ethiopia is experiencing insufficient foreign currency reserves and the continuous depreciation of the national currency, the Ethiopian birr.¹⁵

As of October 2, 2022, approximately 3,592 F-1 nonimmigrant students who are Ethiopian citizens are enrolled at SEVP-certified academic institutions in the United States. Given the extent of the current crisis in Ethiopia, affected students whose primary means of financial support comes from Ethiopia may need to be exempt from the normal student employment requirements to continue their studies in the United States. The current crisis has made it unfeasible for many students to safely return to Ethiopia for the foreseeable future. Without employment authorization, these students may lack the means to meet basic living expenses.

What is the minimum course load requirement to maintain valid F-1 nonimmigrant status under this notice?

Undergraduate F-1 nonimmigrant students who receive on-campus or off-campus employment authorization under this notice must remain registered for a minimum of six semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term. Undergraduate F-1 nonimmigrant students enrolled in a term of different duration must register for at least one half of the credit hours normally required under a “full course of study.” *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(B) and (F). A graduate-level F-1 nonimmigrant student who receives on-campus or off-campus employment authorization under this notice must remain registered for a minimum of three semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term. *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(5)(v). Nothing in this notice affects the applicability of other minimum course load requirements set by the academic institution.

¹⁴ Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), *There is the potential for extreme food insecurity in conflict and drought-affected areas of Ethiopia* (July 2022), <https://fews.net/east-africa/ethiopia/key-message-update/july-2022>.

¹⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *GIEWS – Global Information and Early Warning System, Country Briefs, Ethiopia* (Aug. 24, 2022), <https://www.fao.org/giews/countrybrief/country.jsp?code=ETH&lang=en>.

In addition, an F-1 nonimmigrant student (either undergraduate or graduate) granted on-campus or off-campus employment authorization under this notice may count up to the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter of online or distance education toward satisfying this minimum course load requirement, unless their course of study is in an English language study program.¹⁶ *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(G). An F-1 nonimmigrant student attending an approved private school in kindergarten through grade 12 or public school in grades 9 through 12 must maintain “class attendance for not less than the minimum number of hours a week prescribed by the school for normal progress toward graduation,” as required under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(E). Nothing in this notice affects the applicability of federal and state labor laws limiting the employment of minors.

May an eligible F-1 nonimmigrant student who already has on-campus or off-campus employment authorization benefit from the suspension of regulatory requirements under this notice?

Yes. An F-1 nonimmigrant student who is a Ethiopian citizen, regardless of country of birth (or an individual having no nationality who last habitually resided in Ethiopia), who already has on-campus or off-campus employment authorization and is otherwise eligible may benefit under this notice, which suspends certain regulatory requirements relating to the minimum course load requirement under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i) and certain employment eligibility requirements under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9). Such an eligible F-1 nonimmigrant student may benefit without having to apply for a new Form I-766, Employment Authorization Document (EAD). To benefit from this notice, the F-1 nonimmigrant student must request that their designated school official (DSO) enter the following statement in the remarks field of the student’s Student and

¹⁶ DHS considers students who are compliant with ICE coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) guidance for nonimmigrant students to be in compliance with regulations while such COVID-19 guidance remains in effect. *See* ICE Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions on COVID-19, <https://www.ice.gov/coronavirus> (last visited Oct. 6, 2022).

Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) record, which the student's Form I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status, will reflect:

Approved for more than 20 hours per week of [DSO must insert "on-campus" or "off-campus," depending upon the type of employment authorization the student already has] employment authorization and reduced course load under the Special Student Relief authorization from [DSO must insert the beginning date of the notice or the beginning date of the student's employment, whichever date is later] until [DSO must insert either the student's program end date, the current EAD expiration date (if the student is currently authorized for off-campus employment), or the end date of this notice, whichever date comes first].¹⁷

Must the F-1 nonimmigrant student apply for reinstatement after expiration of this special employment authorization if the student reduces his or her "full course of study"?

No. DHS will deem an F-1 nonimmigrant student who receives and comports with the employment authorization permitted under this notice to be engaged in a "full course of study"¹⁸ for the duration of the student's employment authorization, provided that a qualifying undergraduate level F-1 nonimmigrant student remains registered for a minimum of six semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term, and a qualifying graduate level F-1 nonimmigrant student remains registered for a minimum of three semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term. *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(5)(v) and (f)(6)(i)(F). Undergraduate F-1 nonimmigrant students enrolled in a term of different duration must register for at least one half of the credit hours normally required under a "full course of study." *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(B) and (F). DHS will not require such students to apply for reinstatement under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(16) if they are otherwise maintaining F-1 nonimmigrant status.

¹⁷ Because the suspension of requirements under this notice applies throughout an academic term during which the suspension is in effect, DHS considers an F-1 nonimmigrant student who engages in a reduced course load or employment (or both) after this notice is effective to be engaging in a "full course of study," *see* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6), and eligible for employment authorization, through the end of any academic term for which such student is matriculated as of [date], 2024, provided the student satisfies the minimum course load requirements in this notice.

¹⁸ *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6).

Will an F-2 dependent (spouse or minor child) of an F-1 nonimmigrant student covered by this notice be eligible for employment authorization?

No. An F-2 spouse or minor child of an F-1 nonimmigrant student is not authorized to work in the United States and, therefore, may not accept employment under the F-2 nonimmigrant status, consistent with 8 CFR 214.2(f)(15)(i).

Will the suspension of the applicability of the standard student employment requirements apply to an individual who receives an initial F-1 visa and makes an initial entry into the United States after the effective date of this notice in the Federal Register?

No. The suspension of the applicability of the standard regulatory requirements only applies to certain F-1 nonimmigrant students who meet the following conditions:

- (1) Are a citizen of Ethiopia regardless of country of birth (or an individual having no nationality who last habitually resided in Ethiopia);
- (2) Were lawfully present in the United States in F-1 nonimmigrant status, under section 101(a)(15)(F)(i) of the INA, 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(F)(i) on the date of publication of this notice;
- (3) Are enrolled in an academic institution that is SEVP-certified for enrollment of F-1 nonimmigrant students;
- (4) Are maintaining F-1 nonimmigrant status; and
- (5) Are experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current crisis in Ethiopia.

An F-1 nonimmigrant student who does not meet all these requirements is ineligible for the suspension of the applicability of the standard regulatory requirements (even if experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current crisis in Ethiopia).

Does this notice apply to a continuing F-1 nonimmigrant student who departs the United States after the effective date of this notice in the Federal Register and who needs to obtain a new F-1 visa before returning to the United States to continue an educational program?

Yes. This notice applies to such an F-1 nonimmigrant student, but only if the DSO has properly notated the student's SEVIS record, which will then appear on the student's Form I-20. The normal rules for visa issuance remain applicable to a nonimmigrant who needs to apply for a new F-1 visa to continue an educational program in the United States.

Does this notice apply to elementary school, middle school, and high school students in F-1 status?

Yes. However, this notice does not by itself reduce the required course load for F-1 nonimmigrant students from Ethiopia enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 at a private school, or grades 9 through 12 at a public high school. Such students must maintain the minimum number of hours of class attendance per week prescribed by the academic institution for normal progress toward graduation, as required under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(E). The suspension of certain regulatory requirements related to employment through this notice is applicable to all eligible F-1 nonimmigrant students regardless of educational level. Eligible F-1 nonimmigrant students from Ethiopia enrolled in an elementary school, middle school, or high school may benefit from the suspension of the requirement in 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(i) that limits on-campus employment to 20 hours per week while school is in session.

On-Campus Employment Authorization

Will an F-1 nonimmigrant student who receives on-campus employment authorization under this notice be authorized to work more than 20 hours per week while school is in session?

Yes. For an F-1 nonimmigrant student covered in this notice, the Secretary is suspending the applicability of the requirement in 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(i) that limits an F-1 nonimmigrant student's on-campus employment to 20 hours per week while school is in session. An eligible F-

1 nonimmigrant student has authorization to work more than 20 hours per week while school is in session if the DSO has entered the following statement in the remarks field of the student's SEVIS record, which will be reflected on the student's Form I-20:

Approved for more than 20 hours per week of on-campus employment and reduced course load, under the Special Student Relief authorization from [DSO must insert the beginning date of this notice or the beginning date of the student's employment, whichever date is later] until [DSO must insert the student's program end date or the end date of this notice, whichever date comes first].¹⁹

To obtain on-campus employment authorization, the F-1 nonimmigrant student must demonstrate to the DSO that the employment is necessary to avoid severe economic hardship directly resulting from the current crisis in Ethiopia. An F-1 nonimmigrant student authorized by the DSO to engage in on-campus employment by means of this notice does not need to file any applications with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The standard rules permitting full-time on-campus employment when school is not in session or during school vacations apply, as described in 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(i).

Will an F-1 nonimmigrant student who receives on-campus employment authorization under this notice have authorization to reduce the normal course load and still maintain his or her F-1 nonimmigrant student status?

Yes. DHS will deem an F-1 nonimmigrant student who receives on-campus employment authorization under this notice to be engaged in a "full course of study"²⁰ for the purpose of maintaining their F-1 nonimmigrant student status for the duration of the on-campus employment, if the student satisfies the minimum course load requirement described in this notice, consistent with 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(F). However, the authorization to reduce the normal

¹⁹ Because the suspension of requirements under this notice applies throughout an academic term during which the suspension is in effect, DHS considers an F-1 nonimmigrant student who engages in a reduced course load or employment (or both) after this notice is effective to be engaging in a "full course of study," *see* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6), and eligible for employment authorization, through the end of any academic term for which such student is matriculated as of [date], 2024, provided the student satisfies the minimum course load requirements in this notice.

²⁰ *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6).

course load is solely for DHS purposes of determining valid F-1 nonimmigrant student status.

Nothing in this notice mandates that school officials allow an F-1 nonimmigrant student to take a reduced course load if the reduction would not meet the academic institution's minimum course load requirement for continued enrollment.²¹

Off-Campus Employment Authorization

What regulatory requirements does this notice temporarily suspend relating to off-campus employment?

For an F-1 nonimmigrant student covered by this notice, as provided under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(ii)(A), the Secretary is suspending the following regulatory requirements relating to off-campus employment:

(a) The requirement that a student must have been in F-1 nonimmigrant student status for one full academic year to be eligible for off-campus employment;

(b) The requirement that an F-1 nonimmigrant student must demonstrate that acceptance of employment will not interfere with the student's carrying a full course of study;

(c) The requirement that limits an F-1 nonimmigrant student's employment authorization to no more than 20 hours per week of off-campus employment while the school is in session; and

(d) The requirement that the student demonstrate that employment under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(i) is unavailable or otherwise insufficient to meet the needs that have arisen as a result of the unforeseen circumstances.

²¹ Minimum course load requirement for enrollment in a school must be established in a publicly available document (e.g., catalog, website, or operating procedure), and it must be a standard applicable to all students (U.S. citizens and foreign students) enrolled at the school.

Will an F-1 nonimmigrant student who receives off-campus employment authorization under this notice have authorization to reduce the normal course load and still maintain F-1 nonimmigrant status?

Yes. DHS will deem an F-1 nonimmigrant student who receives off-campus employment authorization by means of this notice to be engaged in a “full course of study”²² for the purpose of maintaining F-1 nonimmigrant student status for the duration of the student’s employment authorization if the student satisfies the minimum course load requirement described in this notice, consistent with 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(F). However, the authorization for a reduced course load is solely for DHS purposes of determining valid F-1 nonimmigrant student status. Nothing in this notice mandates that school officials allow an F-1 nonimmigrant student to take a reduced course load if such reduced course load would not meet the school’s minimum course load requirement.²³

How may an eligible F-1 nonimmigrant student obtain employment authorization for off-campus employment with a reduced course load under this notice?

An F-1 nonimmigrant student must file a Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, with USCIS to apply for off-campus employment authorization based on severe economic hardship directly resulting from the current crisis in Ethiopia.²⁴ Filing instructions are located at <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765>.

Fee considerations. Submission of a Form I-765 currently requires payment of a \$410 fee. An applicant who is unable to pay the fee may submit a completed Form I-912, Request for Fee Waiver, along with the Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization. *See* www.uscis.gov/feewaiver. The submission must include an explanation about why USCIS

²² *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6).

²³ Minimum course load requirement for enrollment in a school must be established in a publicly available document (e.g., catalog, website, or operating procedure), and it must be a standard applicable to all students (U.S. citizens and foreign students) enrolled at the school.

²⁴ *See* 8 CFR 274a.12(c)(3)(iii).

should grant the fee waiver and the reason(s) for the inability to pay, and any evidence to support the reason(s). *See* 8 CFR 103.7(c).

Supporting documentation. An F-1 nonimmigrant student seeking off-campus employment authorization due to severe economic hardship must demonstrate the following to their DSO:

- (1) This employment is necessary to avoid severe economic hardship; and
- (2) The hardship is a direct result of the current crisis in Ethiopia.

If the DSO agrees that the F-1 nonimmigrant student is entitled to receive such employment authorization, the DSO must recommend application approval to USCIS by entering the following statement in the remarks field of the student's SEVIS record, which will then appear on that student's Form I-20:

Recommended for off-campus employment authorization in excess of 20 hours per week and reduced course load under the Special Student Relief authorization from the date of the USCIS authorization noted on Form I-766 until [DSO must insert the program end date or the end date of this notice, whichever date comes first].²⁵

The F-1 nonimmigrant student must then file the properly endorsed Form I-20 and Form I-765 according to the instructions for the Form I-765. The F-1 nonimmigrant student may begin working off campus only upon receipt of the EAD from USCIS.

DSO recommendation. In making a recommendation that an F-1 nonimmigrant student be approved for Special Student Relief, the DSO certifies that:

- (a) The F-1 nonimmigrant student is in good academic standing and is carrying a "full course of study" ²⁶ at the time of the request for employment authorization;

²⁵ Because the suspension of requirements under this notice applies throughout an academic term during which the suspension is in effect, DHS considers an F-1 nonimmigrant student who engages in a reduced course load or employment (or both) after this notice is effective to be engaging in a "full course of study," *see* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6), and eligible for employment authorization, through the end of any academic term for which such student is matriculated as of [date], 2024, provided the student satisfies the minimum course load requirements in this notice.

²⁶ *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6).

(b) The F-1 nonimmigrant student is a citizen of Ethiopia, regardless of country of birth (or an individual having no nationality who last habitually resided in Ethiopia), and is experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current crisis in Ethiopia, as documented on the Form I-20;

(c) The F-1 nonimmigrant student has confirmed that the student will comply with the reduced course load requirements of this notice and register for the duration of the authorized employment for a minimum of six semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term if at the undergraduate level, or for a minimum of three semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term if the student is at the graduate level;²⁷ and

(d) The off-campus employment is necessary to alleviate severe economic hardship to the individual as a direct result of the current crisis in Ethiopia.

Processing. To facilitate prompt adjudication of the student's application for off-campus employment authorization under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(ii)(C), the F-1 nonimmigrant student should do both of the following:

(a) Ensure that the application package includes the following documents:

(1) A completed Form I-765 with all applicable supporting evidence;

(2) The required fee or properly documented fee waiver request as defined in 8 CFR 103.7(c); and

(3) A signed and dated copy of the student's Form I-20 with the appropriate DSO recommendation, as previously described in this notice; and

(b) Send the application in an envelope which is clearly marked on the front of the envelope, bottom right-hand side, with the phrase "SPECIAL STUDENT RELIEF."²⁸ Failure to include this notation may result in significant processing delays.

²⁷ 8 CFR 214.2(f)(5)(v).

²⁸ Guidance for direct filing addresses can be found here: <https://www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses>.

If USCIS approves the student's Form I-765, USCIS will send the student a Form I-766 EAD as evidence of employment authorization. The EAD will contain an expiration date that does not exceed the end of the granted temporary relief.

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Considerations

Can an F-1 nonimmigrant student apply for TPS and for benefits under this notice at the same time?

Yes. An F-1 nonimmigrant student who has not yet applied for TPS or for other relief that reduces the student's course load per term and permits an increased number of work hours per week, such as Special Student Relief,²⁹ under this notice has two options.

Under the first option, the F-1 nonimmigrant student may apply for TPS according to the instructions in the USCIS notice designating Ethiopia for TPS elsewhere in this issue of the Federal Register. All TPS applicants must file a Form I-821, Application for Temporary Protected Status with the appropriate fee (or request a fee waiver). Although not required to do so, if F-1 nonimmigrant students want to obtain a new TPS-related EAD that is valid through [DATE], 2024, and to be eligible for automatic EAD extensions that may be available to certain EADs with an A-12 or C-19 category code, they must file Form I-765 and pay the Form I-765 fee (or request a fee waiver). After receiving the TPS-related EAD, an F-1 nonimmigrant student may request that their DSO make the required entry in SEVIS, issue an updated Form I-20, as described in this notice, and notate that the nonimmigrant student has been authorized to carry a reduced course load and is working pursuant to a TPS-related EAD. So long as the F-1 nonimmigrant student maintains the minimum course load described in this notice, does not otherwise violate their nonimmigrant status, including as provided under 8 CFR 214.1(g), and maintains TPS, then the student maintains F-1 status and TPS concurrently.

²⁹ See DHS Study in the States, Special Student Relief, <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students/special-student-relief> (last visited Oct. 6, 2022).

Under the second option, the F-1 nonimmigrant student may apply for an EAD under Special Student Relief by filing Form I-765 with the location specified in the filing instructions. At the same time, the F-1 nonimmigrant student may file a separate TPS application but must submit the Form I-821 according to the instructions provided in the Federal Register notice designating Ethiopia for TPS. If the F-1 nonimmigrant student has already applied for employment authorization under Special Student Relief, they are not required to submit the Form I-765 as part of the TPS application. However, some nonimmigrant students may wish to obtain a TPS EAD in light of certain extensions that may be available to EADs with an A-12 or C-19 category code that are not available to the C-3 category under which Special Student Relief falls. The F-1 nonimmigrant student should check the appropriate box when filling out Form I-821 to indicate whether a TPS-related EAD is being requested. Again, so long as the F-1 nonimmigrant student maintains the minimum course load described in this notice and does not otherwise violate the student's nonimmigrant status, included as provided under 8 CFR 214.1(g), the nonimmigrant will be able to maintain compliance requirements for F-1 nonimmigrant student status while having TPS.

When a student applies simultaneously for TPS and benefits under this notice, what is the minimum course load requirement while an application for employment authorization is pending?

The F-1 nonimmigrant student must maintain normal course load requirements for a “full course of study”³⁰ unless or until the nonimmigrant student receives employment authorization under this notice. TPS-related employment authorization, by itself, does not authorize a nonimmigrant student to drop below twelve credit hours, or otherwise applicable minimum requirements (e.g., clock hours for non-traditional academic programs). Once approved for Special Student Relief employment authorization, the F-1 nonimmigrant student may drop below twelve credit hours, or otherwise applicable minimum requirements (with a minimum of six

³⁰ See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6).

semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term if at the undergraduate level, or for a minimum of three semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term if at the graduate level). *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(5)(v), (f)(6), and (f)(9)(i) and (ii).

How does a student who has received a TPS-related EAD then apply for authorization to take a reduced course load under this notice?

There is no further application process with USCIS if a student has been approved for a TPS-related EAD. The F-1 nonimmigrant student must demonstrate and provide documentation to the DSO of the direct economic hardship resulting from the current crisis in Ethiopia. The DSO will then verify and update the student's record in SEVIS to enable the F-1 nonimmigrant student with TPS to reduce the course load without any further action or application. No other EAD needs to be issued for the F-1 nonimmigrant student to have employment authorization.

Can a noncitizen who has been granted TPS apply for reinstatement of F-1 nonimmigrant student status after the noncitizen's F-1 nonimmigrant student status has lapsed?

Yes. Regulations permit certain students who fall out of F-1 nonimmigrant student status to apply for reinstatement. *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(16). This provision might apply to students who worked on a TPS-related EAD or dropped their course load before publication of this notice, and therefore fell out of student status. These students must satisfy the criteria set forth in the F-1 nonimmigrant student status reinstatement regulations.

How long will this notice remain in effect?

This notice grants temporary relief until [DATE], 2024,³¹ to eligible F-1 nonimmigrant students. DHS will continue to monitor the situation in Ethiopia. Should the special provisions

³¹ Because the suspension of requirements under this notice applies throughout an academic term during which the suspension is in effect, DHS considers an F-1 nonimmigrant student who engages in a reduced course load or employment (or both) after this notice is effective to be engaging in a "full course of study," *see* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6), and eligible for employment authorization, through the end of any academic term for which such student is matriculated as of [date], 2024, provided the student satisfies the minimum course load requirement in this notice. DHS also considers students who engage in online coursework pursuant to ICE coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) guidance for nonimmigrant students to be in compliance with regulations while such guidance remains in effect. *See* ICE Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions on COVID-19, Nonimmigrant Students & SEVP-Certified Schools: Frequently Asked Questions, <https://www.ice.gov/coronavirus> (last visited Oct. 6, 2022).

authorized by this notice need modification or extension, DHS will announce such changes in the Federal Register.

Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA)

An F-1 nonimmigrant student seeking off-campus employment authorization due to severe economic hardship resulting from the current crisis in Ethiopia must demonstrate to the DSO that this employment is necessary to avoid severe economic hardship. A DSO who agrees that a nonimmigrant student should receive such employment authorization must recommend an application approval to USCIS by entering information in the remarks field of the student's SEVIS record. The authority to collect this information is in the SEVIS collection of information currently approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under OMB Control Number 1653-0038.

This notice also allows an eligible F-1 nonimmigrant student to request employment authorization, work an increased number of hours while the academic institution is in session, and reduce their course load while continuing to maintain F-1 nonimmigrant student status.

To apply for employment authorization, certain F-1 nonimmigrant students must complete and submit a currently approved Form I-765 according to the instructions on the form. OMB has previously approved the collection of information contained on the current Form I-765, consistent with the PRA (OMB Control No. 1615-0040). Although there will be a slight increase in the number of Form I-765 filings because of this notice, the number of filings currently contained in the OMB annual inventory for Form I-765 is sufficient to cover the additional filings. Accordingly, there is no further action required under the PRA.

Alejandro Mayorkas,
Secretary,
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
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